

Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28) hailed the beginning of the end of the burdensome prescription drug coverage gap known as the “donut hole” following the issuance of \$250 checks to qualified seniors.

These checks will continue to be mailed out in the coming months to help millions of seniors nationwide as they reached this coverage gap. In 2011, a 50 percent reimbursement check will be issued. Within the decade, the health care reform bill passed in March will completely close the donut hole, ending this troubling coverage gap.

“Our seniors should not have to choose between their life saving medication and putting food on the table,” said Slaughter. “Every year, 9,000 residents in the 28th Congressional and millions more around the country who are on fixed incomes reach the ‘donut hole’ and are forced to pay the full cost of their prescription drugs out of pocket. I am delighted to see this immediate benefit of the recently enacted health reform law help our seniors achieve the dignity we owe each one of them.”

On June 10, 2010, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) began sending out \$250 checks to seniors spending \$2,830 in drug costs. Under Medicare Part D, which was enacted in 2006, prescription drug coverage was introduced to the Medicare program. Despite this coverage, a gap -- commonly known as the “donut hole” -- existed that left many seniors covering part of their expenses out of pocket.

“Health reform will rein in costs, reduce the deficit, and put the focus back on and away from big insurance companies and their profits,” said Slaughter. “The rebate checks that begin hitting mailboxes today are proof positive of the commitment we made to reduce long term costs, increase long term health, and maintain Medicare’s long term fiscal solvency.”

The health care reform law included several important provisions for seniors, including many addressing long term problems that have been left unaddressed for far too long. This includes

a focus on preventative care, through such measures as free mammograms and colonoscopies, increasing long-term health and reducing long term costs.

The benefits of reform are expected to cut across all segments of Western New York. It extends coverage to 22,000 uninsured residents, guarantees that 7,600 residents with pre-existing conditions can obtain coverage, and gives more than 12,700 small businesses in Western New York relief from burgeoning health care costs to stay competitive in these tough economic times.

Seniors unsure of whether or not they fall into the donut hole can check their estimated drug costs [here](#) or [click here](#) for more information.